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COMING EVENTS

SEPT	4	General Meeting	Aboriginal Land Management & use of Plants – Dr Beth Gott
	7	Plant Group Excursion *	Anglesea area
	11	Plant Group	Workshop
	16	Excursion: Brisbane Ranges *	Leader: John Bottomley
	18	Bird Group	Rosellas of Geelong Area – John Bottomley
	20	Mid-week Bird Group Excursion	Angahook State Park
	25	Biodiversity Group	Workshop
OCT	2	General Meeting *	TBA (see bottom of page 1)
	9	Plant Group	Workshop
	16	Bird Group	Short-tailed Shearwaters – Barry Lingham
	18	Mid-week Bird Group Excursion	Portarlington Sewage Ponds – Leader: Peter Bright
	21	Excursion: Lerderderg Gorge	Leaders: Marilyn Hewish and Alison Watson
	25	Biodiversity Group	Workshop

* Note changes to program

GFNC Web page http://member.austasia.net/~gfnc
Email address: gfnc@mail.austasia.net

EXCURSION TO BRISBANE RANGES
16th September, 2001

Where?
The Foresters Track, Banksia Track, Hazel Track Circuit.
Leader:
John Bottomley (plus I hope someone else once I have found them! (Dick Southcombe is not available to do it. The Ted Errey Nature Circuit will be officially opened later in the year.)
Depart:
Club Rooms behind Clairvaux College at 9.00 am.
Meeting place:
The Parking area in front of the Anakie General Store at 9.30 am.
We will proceed in convoy from this point. It will take about fifteen minutes to the start of the track from here.
What we will see:
This is a not very often visited part of the National Park with open and rocky areas and a wide variety of plant life. It is the area where we had an unconfirmed but convincing report of a Bush Thick Knee last year.
The walk will be about four kilometres long.
Enquiries:
John Bottomley Ph. 5284 1554

DON'T FORGET!

- **Survey of the Point Richards Reserve:** This important reserve contains significant wetland and remnant vegetation. It is situated on the outskirts of Portarlington. The GFNC survey the site for flora and fauna on Saturday 13 October. The activity will be undertaken in conjunction with the Portarlington Foreshore Committee and Coastcare/Coast Action.
- **Portarlington residents and members of local groups interested in the preservation of the habitat at Point Richards will be invited to join us . Please note this date in your diary and let Barry Lingham know if you can assist (Ph. 5255 4291).**
- **VFNCA 2001 Spring Campout** will be held at the Grampians 26 – 30 October 2001. It will be based at Camp Acacia in Halls Gap. Accommodation and meals – Friday dinner to Tuesday lunch inclusive $170 – $175, Friday dinner to Sunday lunch inclusive $100.00. Meals only Friday to Tuesday $110.00, Friday to Sunday $70.00. Attending but not staying or eating at Camp Acacia $30.00. Booking forms are now available and they would like them returned with a self addressed envelope as soon as possible. The final date for payment is September 7. Excursions will be finalised closer to time. Copies of the booking forms are available from Ray Baverstock.
- ANGAIR 2001 WILDFLOWER SHOW will be held at the Memorial Hall - Anglesea on Saturday 22 – Sunday 23 September, 10.00 – 5.00 pm. Admission ($4.00 – $2.00) includes bus tours and guided walks. Special feature this year – A Wildlife experience – alive and up close – reptiles, insects, spiders and sea life. GFNC will have a display at the show this year. Anyone interested in assisting please contact Alison 5266 1087.

Tonight our guest speaker will be...
Dr Beth Gott who will speak on Aboriginal land management and use of plants in South Eastern Australia.

Her present position is Honorary Research Associate, Department of Biological Sciences, Monash University. During the past 16 years, Beth has been involved in the establishment of databases of plant species used by Aborigines in South Eastern Australia. These include research into Aboriginal names for plants. She has given consultative advice to Koorie organisations, Southern Bushfood Network, schools, Government departments, individual researchers and members of the public on many topics associated with plant use and land management by Koories. She lectures at Monash University, Victoria University, Deakin University, Latrobe University, Southern School of Natural Therapies, and to many community groups.

Beth is the author of two popular books:
Gott, B. & Conran,J. 1991 *Victorian Koorie Plants*. Yangennanock Women's Group, Hamilton, Vic.3300.
Zola, N. & Gott, B. 1992 *Koorie Plants, Koorie People.* Koorie Heritage Trust, Melbourne.

Next month's speaker will be announced at tonight's meeting.
(David Morgan is unavailable due to work commitments. He will be rescheduled later – possibly November.)

For more notices...
see pages 3, 6, 8, 9 & 10

OUT AND ABOUT

...Valda Dedman

We are lucky in Geelong. It's easy enough to see a Koala (Anakie Gorge) or an Eastern Grey Kangaroo (Anglesea Golf Course). Black Wallabies frequent the riverside paths in the heart of suburbia. But many of Australia's native animals are nocturnal. We hear the possums in the roof but don't often see them.

To see gliders you usually need to go spotlighting, which is how we saw the Greater Glider near Cania Gorge in Queensland. It was at the top of a tall tree, fluffy tail looping over a branch. We knew it by its wide rounded ears.

The Sugar Glider was feeding in broad daylight, at head height on a tree trunk. With sharp chisel teeth, it was enlarging incisions in the bark and lapping up the sweet sap flow. Oblivious to people around, it was so intent on feeding that I could have stroked it. As the glider worked from one incision to the next, it was followed around the tree by a Blue-faced Honeyeater, taking advantage of the fresh food supply. Both creatures may have been responding to a particularly dry season with a less than usual nectar flow. Greater Gliders eat only eucalypt leaves, not sap.

The first Rufous Bettong we saw was dead, a recent road kill. A surprisingly heavy animal for its size, it was rabbit-coloured with long guard hairs, and slightly more than rabbit-sized, but with a long tapering tail. Its back feet were dark and very long, typical kangaroo-shaped, its front paws were like little hands, but with extremely long sharp claws. Its rounded furry ears were pink inside, and its nose was hairy.

We were able to make the acquaintance of many more bettongs at Cania Gorge Caravan Park and they absolutely enchanted us. At 4.30 pm each day the birds are fed. Flocks of Rainbow Lorikeets and King Parrots take seed from your hand (the King Parrots are much gentler). When they have finished, the Crested Pigeons and Apostlebirds move in and feed from seed spilt on the ground; and then, when the sun has gone, the bettongs come and scratch through the soft dust for the leftovers.

We sat in the cold night air and watched them feeding, up to fifteen animals at a time. They collect food only with their mouths; little front paws scratch in the dirt from time to time. They rest on their long back feet and the tail trails behind.

They are very alert little creatures, interacting with each other, but not with humans. They may approach almost to your feet if you stay still. They will stand up tall and look around, little pink hands facing each other, not drooping like a kangaroo's paws. They communicate by sound, little contact grunts and noisy aggressive growls. Sometimes something (or another bettong) will set them all off and they go bounding away in all directions, to gradually circle and return to the feeding area. There were some noisy squabbles and they reminded us of a pack of monkeys. A male would sometimes approach a female, sniffing to see if she was sexually responsive. She would reply with a growl and a kick and this was enough to set the whole group in motion. Or almost. Two of them did not join in the general commotion, but just kept on munching. These two 'talked' quietly to each other and may have been mother and child. The young follows its mother around until 23 weeks old.

During the day Rufous Bettongs *Aepypyramus rufescens* sleep in cone-shaped nests, which they make at the base of tussocks or against fallen logs. They carry grasses to the nest in their prehensile tails, pushing newer grass underneath older layers with their noses.

In the wild they feed on tubers, roots and fungi, seeds and flowers as well as some insects. They do not seem to need to drink. They are still reasonably common in Eastern Queensland, but now uncommon in New South Wales and extinct in Victoria. They used to occur along the mid Murray; one was collected at Violet Town in 1874 and there is a Museum specimen that may have been collected at Bendigo a century ago.

It was almost dark, but still light enough to make out the form of a small wallaby. It had fine features, a dark muzzle and paws, and a long untapering tail laid out along the ground beside it. We were at Crow's Nest National Park and looking at the elusive Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby. It observed us, too, for a few moments, then turned back towards the jumbled boulders of the creek and with long sure leaps, was swiftly gone.

There are two widely separated populations of Brush-tailed Rock Wallabies *Petrogale penicillata* in Victoria. One is at the Grampians and the other, 520 km to the east, around the Upper Snowy River, where they were almost wiped out in the early 20th century. One winter a shooting party killed 1200 for the fur trade in the Suggan Buggan area. Predation by foxes and competition with goats and rabbits have further reduced the colonies to one in the Grampians and 3 to 5 in the Upper Snowy. They are classified as endangered in Victoria.

Many thanks to Mark Trengove for letting us know that the Batesford Callitris population is not extinct. My reference was an article by Robyn Adams in the Victorian Naturalist Vol. 117 (1) of February 2000. I hope the seedling Mark protected with a guard is still surviving and it is good to know that the Buckley Falls plantings came from the same locality.

Valda

Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture
5 October, 2001

The Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat extends a cordial invitation to members of the Geelong Field Naturalists Club, to attend their annual Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture.

Guest speaker will be Professor Ian Plimer, Professor of Geology at University of Melbourne. The topic of his talk is 'The History of the Earth in 45 Minutes.' He uses the evidence in the geological record to critically examine popular myths. His most recent book is *A Short History of Earth.*

The Lecture commences at 8 pm. It will be held in the Ballarat Horticulture Centre, corner Gillies and Gregory Street, Ballarat.

Australian Naturalists' Network
... the Tasmanian Experience

A mail-out providing information about the 2002 Australian Naturalists' Network Get Together in Launceston is now available. Although the Get Together is not until November next year, the Coordinators John and Marion Simmons are urging participants to book accommodation and transport within the next 8 weeks; a concurrent, very large Craft Fair at near-by Deloraine attracts many mainland visitors and stall-holders who book 12 months ahead every year.

The Get Together has been planned in 3 parts – Core Programme 9th to 18th November at Launceston. Pre-core tour 6th to 9th November north-east and east coast. Post-core tour 19th to 22nd November north-west and west coast.

Contact Dick Southcombe 5243 3916 (or Ray Baverstock 5243 7025 during 13th September to 7th October period) for a copy of this most helpful mail out.

Plant Group
...Dick Southcombe

During spring the Plant Group plans to visit some of our regions outstanding wildflower areas.

We are hoping these occasions will precede the 2nd Tuesday evening by a few days and so provide topical subject matter for our regular meetings; there could be additional excursions if members wish.

Our September excursion will be to Anglesea on Friday 7th commencing 9.30 am Great Ocean Road/Forest Road carpark. Bring lunch and a friend. If you need transport or wish to comment on day of the month and frequency, contact me on 5243 3916.

Please bring Leon Costerman's book *Native Trees and Shrubs of South Eastern Australia* to our 11th September meeting.

SEPTEMBER DIARY

...Joe Hubbard

A summery start to spring!

1.9.00 Newtown

An early start for summer-time, and getting up in the dark gives one the chance to take in the dawn chorus.

Leading were the Magpies, lovely carolling, in contrast to the Red Wattlebird sounding like a car with a flat battery trying to turn the motor over, the Song Thrush, and then the single note wake-up call of the New Holland Honeyeaters.

A great sunny day of 19^0 C, making Geelong one of the hottest places in Victoria – perfect for weeding the herb garden – and keeping an eye on the Little Raven family – the two young comical with falsetto 'arks' and their awkward flights and crash landings.

Glimpsed a Hobby, directly above me, flying into the wind, banking, showing off rufous markings, then used the wind to accelerate away.

In passing, one of the Ravens put its head right into the hollow to give the possum a pecking.

Watched a Raven preparing lunch for the young ones. It used the flat crosspiece of a power pole as its table – holding with foot, tearing into small pieces what appeared to be meat. Then it flew to backyard tree to feed them.

3.9.00 Newtown

Alerted by Magpies and Little Ravens as they flew up to a Little Eagle which after a bit of harrying from them, gained enough height to discourage pursuit.

Night, about 7.45, called outside to hear the owl (Southern Boobook). Thought it was in 'our' big tree with the hollow, but after spotlighting, found only old Mr Possum getting ready for the night's proceedings

Good to know they're still around. I remember the one on the spouting near the back door holding a sparrow – early evening. Book says they hunt mostly just after dusk and pre-dawn.

6.9.00 You Yangs

Still under the influence of fast moving lows, with bursts of strong winds, showers, then sunshine – one of those 'keep an eye on the weather' days.

At the Stockyards I watched a Fox hunting – with mixed feelings – yet here was still a wild animal practising its art.

For a while I stood among the granite tors and thickets of Snowy Mintbush to escape from the wind.

Red-browed Firetails and a few Grey Fantails were here too. The Firetails were moving over the ground, seed gathering, unaware of the weather. When I moved, a flock of about 100 flew up.

The Mintbushes were showing a few white flowers. I found two bushes with mauve flowers – a nice variation!

Yellow Gums were flowering at East Paddock attracting the honeyeaters, and, close up, a Purple-crowned Lorikeet – beautiful plumage – yet so difficult to see in the foliage.

A flock of 35 White-winged Choughs, greeted me with their scolding harsh alarm calls before flying up into the trees, where they watched, uttering a more plaintive, piping call.

10.9.00 Bannockburn Bush

What a great welcome is the ringing 'chick-up, chick-up, chick-up' call of the Yellow-faced Honeyeater – a small part of the vibrancy you can sense on a sunny spring morning – standing among the flowering Yellow Gums so well attended by feeding birds.

And what lovely trees these are – lovely clean lines with trunks which look as though they were polished for the occasion. Most had creamy flowers, with the occasional tree pink-flowered.

I haven't seen White-eared Honeyeaters in numbers here until today. Most were in the under-storey trees and shrubs.

Calling cuckoos, Fantailed and one with a descending whistle, and Kookaburras added to the excitement.

Hedge Wattle added colour and amongst the forest litter grew Dwarf Greenhood orchids.

13.9.00 Bannockburn Bush

With Gordon McCarthy to check recently placed nesting boxes in the Barwon Water property.

Various creatures were catered for – bats, possums, birds – all with specially designed boxes.

Time ran out before survey could be completed, but the trend was for most to be unoccupied, with a lot showing chewed entrances – some interest had been stimulated.

Delighted to find an Owlet-nightjar who couldn't read the code for species – in a box designated for parrots.

We saw an Eastern Rosella fly from a box designated Crimson Rosella – another illiterate.

21.9.00 Terrick Terrick National Park

Grasslands, granite outcrops, woodlands – a new place to explore – always exciting!

First impression – open woodland of White Cypress-pine interspersed with Yellow and Grey Box.

A short drive found Mt Terrick Terrick, a granite outcrop – excellent view of surrounding countryside.

A Little Eagle passed low overhead and flowering was a Snowy Mintbush and the spectacular Nodding Blue Lily.

Lunched near Reigals Rock – were fascinated by Aboriginal wells situated on several flat areas of granite.

As we sat in the sun, watched the many Fairy Martins, low flying for insects, then lining up to return to their nesting hollows.

Here we saw Babblers, Grey Mistletoe, and on the granite outcrops a few Rock Isotomes with bright mauve-blue flowers.

We had seen Grey-crowned Babblers earlier near Mt Terrick Terrick but suspected that the ones at Riegals Rock were different.

30.9.00 Newtown

Last week – perfect spring weather. This week – wild winds – with a windfall of one calm day.

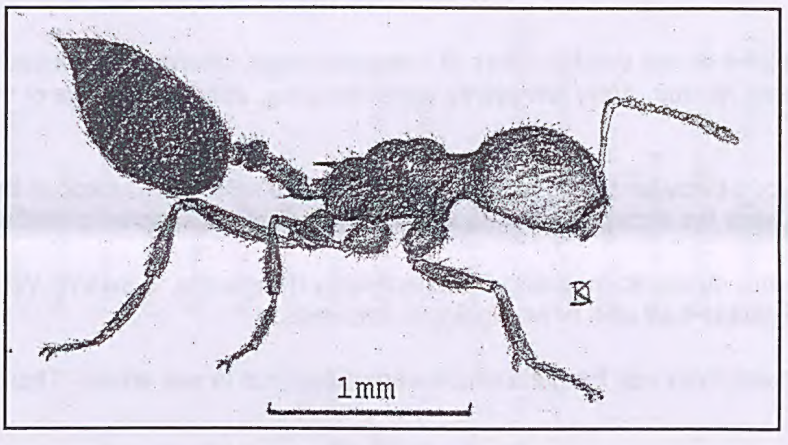
Early morning watering potplants—saw 3 large birds, heron shape, flying overhead, just black silhouettes, steady wing beats. Worked out they were White-necked Herons – unusual!

A few minutes later a Black-shouldered Kite – so white that at first glance I thought it was a Gull.

Cheers!

A Tree Dwelling Ant - *Cremogaster* sp. (Myrmicinae)

...by Dave King
216/86 Church Street, Grovedale 3216



Introduction

During a recent GFNC excursion to the Bannockburn Bush Reserve, a number of invertebrates were collected which included several species of ant. One in particular was a species found up the trunk of a Golden Wattle. Several holes were noted in the tree that were obviously made by a wood boring larva of a moth, probably the Wood Moth *Xyleutes eucalypti* (D'Abrera, 1974) judging by the amount of frass or sawdust deposited at the foot of the tree. The ant was obviously using the abandoned excavations of the moth larva as its nest, as no other nest could be seen.
The ant was very active on the tree at the level at which leaf growth occurred. Although of very small size, it could be observed that it carried its gaster (abdomen) held high, a common trait amongst the *Cremogaster* species of ant. It appears this trait may be intensified when threatened or disturbed.

Description

The general appearance, as illustrated, is typical of members of this genus which are invariably small in size (< 4 mm). They have an acutely pointed black gaster. Other areas are dark brown or reddish brown. The antenna has eleven segments; the antennal club having two segments. A pair of spines are placed on the rear of the propodeum just above the point where the petiole is attached. A significant feature is the attachment of the petiole to the gaster at an anterio-dorsal point. Like the majority of species in this family, the petiole has two segments (Andersen,1991) and in this case is without an erect or significantly enlarged node. The *Cremogaster* carry a sting, but appear not to be aggressive, although other ants in the sub- family Myrmicinae are known to inflict painful stings, thus having the name Fire Ants attributed to them (Goode, 1980).

References

Andersen, A.N. (1991) *The Ants of Southern Australia,* CSIRO, East Melbourne.

D'Abrera, B. (1974) *Moths of Australia,* Landsdowne Press, Melbourne.

Goode, J. (1980) *Insects of Australia,* Angus & Robertson, Melbourne.

Excursion report 19.8.2001
Bannockburn Bush

...Gordon McCarthy

Fifteen people came on the excursion to the Barwon Water Sewage Works at Stephens Road, Bannockburn. This was a good opportunity to look at the bushland and check the nest boxes installed by Barwon Water. This area is primarily Yellow Gum Woodland, with open areas of Themeda Grassland and Acacia.

The day was overcast, with very occasional showers and a strong westerly wind blowing and temperature of approximately 13^0 C.

We had lunch in the Bushland on the southern side of Teesdale Road, where we observed several nests of [what seemed to be] Coconut ants *Nitidus.* Very few plants were flowering, apart from some of the Yellow Gums and Blue Flax Lily.

Bird life was not conspicuous because of the high winds, a Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo in the sun and an Owlet-nightjar looking out of a nest box were the exceptions; although, in saying that, 33 species of bird were seen during the day.

Five different mammals were observed including 6 Eastern Grey Kangaroos, 2 Swamp Wallabies, 2 Sugar Gliders in a nest box and 1 Rabbit. Echidna had also been digging in ant nests.

We saw no reptiles but heard Common Froglets which were numerous in wet areas. There was also one group of Sawfly larvae.

We felt that this excursion would definitely be well worth repeating next year, perhaps in October.

Invertebrates found at Bannockburn Bush (Dave King)

Listed are the invertebrate species collected on the excursion to Bannockburn, Sunday 19th August,.
Of paticular interest were the nests of ants that appeared to be those of the *nitidus* or 'coconut' ant, the host of the larva of the Club emblem. On closer examination by microscope they turned out to be a close relative, namely *Iridomyrmex foetans.*
Another ant of interest, found nesting well up a Golden Wattle tree, was determined to be species of *Cremogaster.* These tiny black ants have the habit of running around with their gaster raised in the air. Only one small nest of Coconut Ant, *Iridomyrmex nitidiceps*, was found in a partially buried piece of timber that was in a region where surface water predominated.
Several of the Casuarina trees were observed to carry the distinctive fruit-like gall of the Coccid bug, *Cylindrococcus spiniferous.*
Other invertebrates collected were:-

Moth larva -- *Catamola thyrsalis*
Extensive infestation of sedge by *Diaspididae* scale.
Click beetle *Lacon sp.,* in large numbers under logs.
Numerous spiders *Miturga sp.,* in dense silk retreats.
Sac spider *Clubiona sp.,* relatively common with their silk retreats under bark.
Huntsman spider *Haleonia sp.,* also under bark.
Water spider *Dolomedes sp.,* under logs in the wetter areas.

NEW MEMBER

Lyndon Johnston

We wish him a long and enjoyable association with our Club.

Welcome back to

Pauline and Tom Fletcher

Who were early Club members. We also wish them a long and enjoyable association with our Club.

Bannockburn Bush Excursion (19.8.2001)

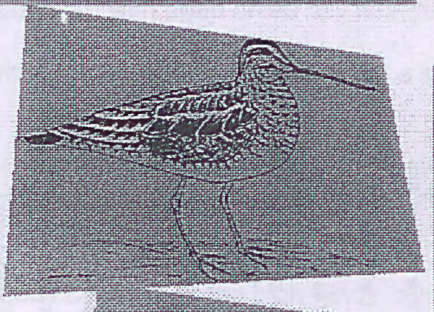
Bird List by Gordon McCarthy

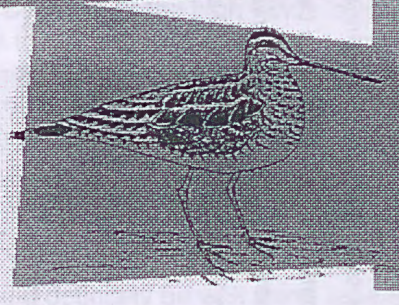
Species	Number	Comments
Hoary Headed Grebes	20	
White-faced Heron	2	
Grey Teal	12	ponds
Chestnut Teal	30	ponds
Hardhead	15	ponds
Wood Duck	2	roadside tree
Whistling Kite	2	
Swamp Harrier	1	
Coot	1	ponds
Masked Lapwing	3	
Galah	14	
Purple-crowned Lorikeet	many	heard calling
Eastern Rosella	2	
Fantail Cuckoo	3 to 4	
Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo	1	
Owlet-nightjar	1	peeping out of nest box
Kookaburra	1	
Fairy Martin	5	
Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	1	
Grey Thrush	3	
Restless Flycatcher	4	
Willie Wagtail	2	
Superb Fairy-wren	6	
Red Wattlebird	12	
Noisy Miner	1	
Yellow-faced Honeyeater	1 or 2	
White-plumed Honeyeater	many	
White-naped Honeyeater		calling
Brown-headed Honeyeater		calling
New Holland Honeyeater	many	feeding in flowering Yellow Gums
Striated Pardalote	1	
Spotted Pardalote	2	
Magpie	2	

Plant List by Bob Preston

Common Name	Botanical Name	Remarks
Rock Fern	*Cheilanthes austrotenuifolia*	
Black Bristle-rush	*Chorizandra enodis*	
Black-anther Flax Lily	*Dianella revoluta*	In flower
Yellow Star	*Hypoxis glabella*	In flower
Juncus	*Juncus ssp.*	
Clustered Sword-Sedge	*Lepidosperma congestum*	
Wattle Mat-rush	*Lomandra filiformis*	
Spear Grass	*Austrostipa sp.*	
Dwarf Greenhood	*Pterostylis nana*	
Onion Grass	*Romulea rosea*	In flower
Black Wattle	*Acacia mearnsii*	
Hedge Wattle	*Acacia paradoxa*	
Golden Wattle	*Acacia pycnantha*	
Australian Sheep's Burr	*Acaena ovina*	
Drooping She-oak	*Allocasuarina verticillata*	
Cranberry Heath	*Astroloma calendula*	
Drooping Cassinia	*Cassinia arcuata*	??
Common Everlasting	*Chrysocephalum apiculatum*	
Bear's Ear	*Cymbonotus preissianus*	
Kidneyweed	*Dichondra repens*	
Pale Sundew	*Drosera peltata*	
River Red-gum	*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*	
Yellow Gum	*Eucalyptus leucoxylon ssp. connata*	In flower
Manna Gum	*Eucalyptus viminalis*	
Common Eutaxia	*Eutaxia microphylla*	Small pea flower
Common Raspwort	*Gonocarpus tetragynus*	
Stinking Pennywort	*Hydrocotyle laxiflora*	
Yellow Wood-sorrel	*Oxalis corniculata*	In flower
Dandelion	*Taraxacum officinale*	In flower
Fungi		At least 8 species

Sally and Sam say..





Join in the fun!..

Make a mask
See what we eat
Find us in the grass
Look like a snipe

SNIPEFEST 2001

Jerringot Wildlife Reserve,
Belmont Common
Tuesday 16 October
10 am till noon

We need your help to make this event a success.
Please let Valda know if you can assist.
Phone 5243 2374
Email *dedmanv@austrasia.net*

MID-WEEK BIRD GROUP EXCURSION REPORT
16 August, 2001

...Rosemary Atkins

Strong, very cold winds were blowing as 8 of us ventured out in search of the Orange-bellied Parrot (OBP) and other birdlife on Swan Island. We thought most birds would be under cover in this weather and we would have a lack-lustre day's birding.

How wrong we were!

We headed straight off to OBP territory and while listening to the soft chattering in the Samphire scrub 5 – 8 OBPs flew out. We caught only a fleeting glimpse of their brilliant green and blue plumage before they were out of sight in the vegetation again. Unfortunately this was our only sighting of these birds for the day.

We noticed it was the golfers who were deterred by the wild weather and the birds were having a field day on the course.

We saw several flocks of 20+ White Fronted Chats, as well as Fairy Wrens, female Flame Robins and White-browed Scrubwrens out in the open.

As we watched a group of Yellow-rumped Thornbills, one bird suddenly began chasing another, who ended the chase by springing almost 1 metre into the air. What a mighty effort for such a small bird!

A Horsfield's Bronze-Cuckoo, determined to be seen, kept alighting on trees in front of us giving a hearty rendition of his song. Another magnificent songster was the Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater who performed his repertoire of songs at close range.

Without Polly's keen eyes, 3 beautifully marked Masked Lapwing chicks may have met an untimely death under our feet. One tiny bird was crouched within 1" (2.5 cm) of my shoe. They remained absolutely still throughout the ordeal as a parent bird called frantically from a distance.

We spotted an albino Chestnut Teal on the water amongst another 200+ Chestnut Teals.

Throughout the morning, a steady stream of White and Straw-necked Ibis flew overhead.

We also saw an Australian Kestrel, Pied Oystercatchers and Little Pied Cormorants.

It was a morning full of surprises with a total of 41 species being recorded.

NEXT MID-WEEK BIRD GROUP EXCURSION
ANGLESEA TO AIREY'S INLET

Thursday, 20 September, 2001

Area to be visited is the back of Anglesea through to Airey's Inlet. There will be lots of wildflowers as well as birds at this time of year.

Meet at the back of the Green Grub in Waurn Ponds at 8.30 am, or 9.00 am at the Alcoa roundabout reached by turning off the Gt. Ocean Rd. on the bend before Anglesea on the road to the right (signed to the Waste Disposal) and continuing past the tip to the roundabout. Finish about 12.30 pm. Bring morning tea. Enquiries for this outing: Pat Streefkerk 52645235

Thursday, 18 October, 2001

Portarlington Sewage Ponds.
Leader: Peter Bright

Mammal Group ...

We will carry out three nights' trapping at Bells Beach between Wednesday 26 and Saturday 29 September.

Meet at the main Bells Beach car park at 4.00 pm, Wednesday 26.9.01 to set out the traps, then at 8.00 am on Thursday, Friday and Saturday to check them. We need to re-check the traps at 5.00 pm on Thursday and Friday.

Further details phone Trevor 5243 4368, email yaugher@pipeline.com.au

BIRD GROUP REPORT
21 August, 2001

...Barry Lingham

Speaker: Trevor Pescott
Reedy Lake Surveys

Reedy Lake is part of the Connewarre system of wetlands formed in the lower reaches of the Barwon River.

Originally, the Barwon was saline all the way to Buckley's Falls. The construction of the breakwater in 1839 stopped salt water entering above Breakwater Road. Prior to 1899, Reedy Lake was a saline intertidal wetland that was regularly inundated by high tides flowing up the Barwon River. During times of flood, the fresh water from the Barwon flowed into Reedy Lake and formed a temporary freshwater wetland, but the salt water would then start to penetrate the lake once more.

Reedy Lake is separated from the main course of the Barwon by a natural levee bank built up by successive flooding and accumulation of sediment from the river. Only peak flows in the river broke over the levee bank to flow into Reedy Lake.

In 1899, a second breakwater was established south of Reedy Lake to stop the flow of tidal water up the Barwon thus guaranteeing the supply of fresh water to the tanneries in Geelong. This process also stopped the regular flow of tidal water into Reedy Lake, transforming it into a freshwater lake.

In 1953, an inlet channel was cut from the Barwon into the lake, creating a more constant supply of water and maintaining consistent water levels. In 1967, an outlet channel was cut that allowed the water level to be regulated by the use of a barrier outlet.

This system appeared to work well for more than 20 years, with satisfactory water quality plus diverse and numerous populations of birds, vegetation and aquatic wildlife.

During the early 1990s, the ecology of the lake started to degrade. It was briefly invigorated by the floods of 1995, but quickly became degraded once more. Tests showed very low oxygen levels in the water and very few small aquatic life-forms present. It was suspected that the presence of large numbers of European Carp had contributed to the decline.

After consultation between the DNRE, GFNC, Field & Game and other parties, it was decided to allow the lake to dry out by opening the outlet. The dry conditions prevailing from December 1996 until late 1997 allowed the drying of the lake and the subsequent death of thousands of carp. The smaller fish were taken by pelicans and other water birds, but the larger fish congregated in the rapidly drying water holes. Eventually they perished, with the piles of rotting carcasses creating an unforgettable smell.

As the lake was allowed to refill, Trevor Pescott led a group of volunteers who monitored the bird populations and aquatic invertebrates. Surveys were conducted every two months.

Over the time of the surveys, from October 1997 until August 2001, a total of 101 different species of birds were observed. Seven species were noted on each of the 18 surveys; Black Swan, Swamp Harrier, Superb Fairy-Wren, White-fronted Chat, Australian Magpie, Skylark & Golden-headed Cisticola.

Twenty two species were noted on only one of the surveys. Birds recorded as 'unusual' that are rarely seen locally or would not be normally expected at Reedy Lake include:
Magpie Goose – Up to 12, 3 surveys
Intermediate Egret – (1) 14.10.99
Glossy Ibis – (1) 08.06.00
White-breasted Sea Eagle – (1) 30.10.97
Wedge-tailed Eagle – (1) 10.8.00
Black Falcon – (1) 08.06.00
Brolga – Up to 5 on 3 surveys
Baillon's Crake – Up to 3, 2 surveys
Latham's Snipe – Up to 12, 4 surveys
White-winged Black Tern – (2) 9.12.99
Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo – Up to 8 on 4 surveys.
Neophema Species – 24 noted 8.6.00. Species not identifiable, although 4 were Blue-wings.
Pallid Cuckoo – Up to 2, 2 surveys
Spiny-cheeked Honeyeater – 1 on 2 surveys
Yellow-faced Honeyeater – 30 on 8.4.99

Some of the more numerous birds included:
Black Swan (650 on 8.6.00)
Straw-necked Ibis (2000 on 20.9.97)
Masked Lapwing (121 on 10.2.00)
In November 1997, more than 100 birds were noted from each of these species: Superb Fairy-Wren, White-fronted Chat, European Goldfinch, Welcome Swallow & Golden-headed Cisticola.

Analysis of the data collected showed some strong seasonal movements in many species, but little evidence of a correlation between bird populations and water level regimes. This meant that the data could not be used as evidence to favour any particular water level, although further analysis of the data may need to be done.

Trevor completed his talk by showing a series of excellent slides of many of the species seen at Reedy Lake. Many of the photographs were taken at Reedy Lake as Trevor has been taking shots of the birds there for many decades.

Next Month's Speaker

John Bottomley will be presenting 'Rosellas of the Geelong Area.' Come along to find out more about these colourful birds.

BIRD OBSERVATIONS – AUGUST 2001

-- compiled by John Bottomley

There are definite signs of a change of season in this month's records. It might not feel like Spring but our Snipe are back, one was seen at Jerringot by Gordon McCarthy on 10 August, as are the cuckoos with records for all our four most common cuckoo species. Several other species are also reported as building nests or feeding young. As in previous months a large number of records have been submitted of flocks of Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoos. These are too numerous to list here but indicate these birds are regularly flying into the Queens Park area in the morning and back to the southwest of Geelong each evening. White-necked Herons continue to be reported more regularly than in recent years. Crested Pigeons are still being regularly reported. As yet we have no breeding records for the Geelong region for this species. The pattern of observations suggests that breeding may in fact be taking place and you are all urged to look for nesting Crested Pigeons over the next two months or so. *[Eddie Walker has verbally mentioned them breeding on his Bacchus Marsh Rd, Anakie property. Ed.]* Thank you to all those who submitted records that have not been published for reasons of space. They all end up in the Bird Report.

Observations were submitted by (BAt) Bryant Attwood, (BL) Barry Lingham, (DS) Dick Southcombe, (GMc) Gordon McCarthy, (JB) John Bottomley, (JCa) Jocelyn Calvert, (JN) John Newman, (LJo) Lyndon Johnston, (LP) Lorraine Preston, (Mhe) Marilyn Hewish, (RP) Bob Preston, (RS) Rosalind Smallwood, (Ssi) Sheila Silver.

Species	Number	Date	Comments	Observer
Painted Button-quail	1	11/08/01	Bannockburn.	GMc
	1	19/08/01	Lorne, Queens Park. Flushed from grassland.	JN
Australian Pelican	3	26/07/01	Highton. Being harassed in flight by Rainbow Lorikeets.	BAt
White-necked Heron	1	21/07/01	Geelong-Ballan Road north of Staceys Road. In flooded paddock.	JCa, JB
	2	12/08/01	Gnarwarre. One at waterhole and one in paddock with white-faced herons.	BAt
	7	18/08/01	Moriac Road near Prices Highway. Flew into a paddock, was there for over an hour.	BAt
	1	19/08/01	Hamilton Highway and Merriwarp Road.	RP, LP, DS, SSi.
	1	19/08/01	Midland Highway near Gheringhap overpass.	BL
	1	21/08/01	Ballarat Cutoff near Friend-in-Hand Road.	JB
	1	25/08/01	Geelong-Ballan Road north of Staceys Road. In flooded paddock.	JCa, JB
Yellow-billed Spoonbill	3	21/07/01	Geelong-Ballan Road north of Staceys Road. In flooded paddock.	JCa, JB
	5	28/07/01	Geelong-Ballan Road north of Staceys Road. In flooded paddock.	JCa, JB
	2	18/08/01	Barrabool Road near Colac Road. In a paddock. Juvenile birds with pinkish (apricot) bills.	BAt
	2	15/08/01	Geelong-Ballan Road north of Staceys Road. In flooded paddock. Sheltering from a howling gale.	JB, JCa
Spotted Harrier	1	19/08/01	Bacchus Marsh. An adult.	MHe
Swamp Harrier	1	10/08/01	Jerringot.	GMc
	1	20/08/01	Lake Connewarre. Observed for an hour continually landing at one location. Possibly nesting?	LJo
Grey Goshawk	1	7/08/01	Fyansford. Flying between trees before flying towards Deviation Hill.	BAt
Peregrine Falcon	2	21/08/01	Marcus Oldham College. Feeding on the remains of a pigeon.	LJo
Buff-banded Rail	1	29/07/01	Fyansford. Also seen 31/07/01.	BAt
Spotless Crake	2+	11/08/01	Long Forest. Calling from the reeds at Long Point.	MHe
Black-tailed Native-hen	2	11/08/01	Serendip.	GMc
	4	10/08/01	Midland Highway near Gheringhap overpass in large swamp.	BL
Latham's Snipe	1	10/08/01	Jerringot. An early return.	GMc
Banded Lapwing	2	27/07/01	Anakie. In paddock a kilometer south of township. Standing on edge of a newly ploughed area.	JB, JCa

Continued on page 16

Species	Number	Date	Comments	Observer
Crested Pigeon	8	29/07/01	Geelong-Bacchus Marsh Road at West Gateway Road	MHe
	1	29/07/01	Balliang East.	MHe
	1	29/07/01	Geelong-Bacchus Marsh Road at Rowsley Road. A new location.	MHe
	7	2/08/01	Carrs Road west of Geelong-Bacchus Marsh Road.	JB
Long-billed Corella	40+	31/07/01	Anakie Village. Several Galahs in flock but no Little Corellas.	JB, JCa
Rainbow Lorikeet	6	26/07/01	Highton. Harassing Australian Pelicans in flight.	BAt
	4	12/08/01	Ocean Grove Primary School. One adult Rainbow and one adult Rainbow/Scaly X (probably) with two young.	BL
Pallid Cuckoo	2	9/08/01	Long Forest.	MHe
Fan-tailed Cuckoo	1	21/07/01	Queens Park. Perched atop Red-gum, calling.	BAt
	1	28/07/01	Fyansford. Calling.	BAt
	Numerous	4/08/01	You Yangs. Widespread and calling.	MHe
	Several	25/08/01	DeMotts Road Anakie. Calling.	JCa, JB
Horsfield's Bronze-cuckoo	2-3	9/08/01	Long Forest. Calling continuously.	MHe
	3	16/08/01	Queens Park.	BAt
Shining Bronze-cuckoo	1	9/08/01	Long Forest.	MHe
Barn Owl	1	25/06/01	Granite Road at Box Forest Road.	DHe, MHe
	1	15/08/01	Geelong-Ballan Road at Staceys Road. Standing on roadside at 1915.	JB
Tawny Frogmouth	1	21/08/01	Anakie Village at intersection of Geelong-Ballan and DeMotts Roads. At 2230.	JB, JCa
Rufous Bristlebird	3	5/08/01	Point Addis. Two birds were very tame and within a metre of open car door.	LP, RP
Speckled Warbler	2	9/08/01	Long Forest.	MHe
Fuscous Honeyeater	1	11/08/01	Long Forest at Long Point. Appears to be the only one still present.	MHe
Black-chinned Honeyeater	2	4/08/01	Bannockburn Bush. In Yellow Gums with other honeyeaters.	JN
Jacky Winter	2	4/08/01	You Yangs at the information centre.	MHe
Red-capped Robin	2	9/08/01	Long Forest. Beginning to build nest 4 metres up in fork of Grey Box.	MHe
Flame Robin	2	11/08/01	Long Forest. Two coloured males. One singing.	MHe
Pink Robin	1	17/08/01	Queens Park near bridge. A brown bird.	BAt
Eastern Yellow Robin	2	20/07/01	DeMotts Road, Anakie. Usually only single birds are seen here. Possibly pairing up.	JB
	2	16/08/01	Queens Park. Adult feeding worm to juvenile. One present 17/08/01 searching for worms.	BAt
Crested Shrike-tit	3-5	29/07/01	Fyansford Common. Seen in a variety of locations in general area of the Moorabool River. Seen intermittently until 7/08/01.	BAt
Pied Currawong	27	26/07/01	Highton.	BAt
	14	16/08/01	Queens Park.	BAt
European Greenfinch	2	17/08/01	Queens Park	BAt
Mistletoebird	1	16/07/01	Point Lonsdale. In wire-leafed mistletoe. Present until 23/07/01.	RS
Clamorous Reed-warbler	1	30/07/01	Queens Park	GMc
Bassian Thrush	1	30/07/01	Queens Park.	GMc

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Geelong Field Naturalists Club Inc.

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Early lodgement of articles (small & large) would be a great help - late copy may not be accepted.
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The Meeting Room behind the big hall at Clairvaux Catholic School, Reynolds Road, Belmont.
Use the driveway between the big hall and the playing field.

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